

## A MegaTokyo Change

by Peter

Category: Bubblegum Crisis  
Genre: Adventure  
Language: English  
Status: In-Progress  
Published: 2000-04-25 09:00:00  
Updated: 2000-04-25 09:00:00  
Packaged: 2016-04-27 16:25:51  
Rating: T  
Chapters: 1  
Words: 15,532  
Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)  
Summary: Bubblegum Crisis with a difference

## A MegaTokyo Change

Bubblegum Crisis does not belong to me.

All the incredible talent used to make that show belongs to someone else.

Michelle Grey on the other hand does.

Treecats are part of the Honor Harrington Series by David Weber. Lita belongs to me.

## MegaTokyo Change Series By Peter Withers

The start takes place before BGC #2 at the very least, probably even sooner and ends up after BGC #5.

In a timeline, often changes in it cause very little in the way of a major change in the timeline itself. But other times, the right kind of change at the right time can cause the differences in the timeline to snowball.

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: This really sucks : The day had been rainy and the woman was late getting back to her home. Not having a proper home didn't bother her in the least. It didn't even bother her that most would consider her homeless, though she had a place to live. She even had a job, several in fact. One was to fix automatons that middle class people used. She wasn't great at that but she got them to where they lasted for a lot longer than they would've without her. Another was to scavenge around junkyards, garbage heaps, and other places looking for certain items that could be stripped or fixed if only a bit damaged. These could be sold for at least a bit of money.

Though she had been on the streets for over five years, since GENOM had laid her off in 2027, she made a major error that night by being out there. She carried money on her and took a shortcut. The four Outsiders reminded her of that unfortunate fact. Though she knew some dirty tricks and was healthy, she was still over fifty and outnumbered. She ended up on the ground, bleeding, but still alive though. This was in thanks because of an explosion within a block of where they were. The Outsiders had been spooked by the sudden explosions and ran.

Michelle laid there on the ground, wet, bleeding, and felt where her ribs were cracked. Thankfully, to her, she passed out. She was thinking while things were going dark ::I should have hid myself better, I would have been able to stand up to them at least a bit better if I was a bit younger and stronger. ::

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fan fiction by Peter Withers productions Bubblegum Crisis - MegaTokyo Change #1

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Physics is a funny thing when you think about it. In all actuality, physics is quite easy to understand. It has laws that are followed, what goes up must come down unless going at a velocity of 8 km per/sec. But when physics meets a law called Murphy, strange things happen to physics. Murphy states that when something occurs, that it will occur that the worst/best possible time and place.

The explosions should have destroyed everything in the facility but a white sphere survived and was ejected into the air. Also the sphere flew in the direction that the mugged woman was at and shattered against the wall upwind from her. A silverly-white substance coated her and was soon absorbed by her breathing, her skin, and through the cuts on her body. The rest of the substance was attracted to her and was soon absorbed, leaving nothing behind except for the shattered sphere. None of what that happened would have occurred if all these hadn't take place. But then again, Murphy does have a strange sense of humor.

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Michelle came to and felt like something had pounded her against a wall a few times. :: Oh yeah, I had gotten mugged, oh goody. :: But the pain faded and she felt good. In fact, she felt better than before she had gotten mugged. :: Better health though getting mugged. So much for the much vaunted 'feeling it in the morning'. :: She yawned and got up. To her it was fortunate that those guys had taken her someplace where she wasn't seen by anyone else. She couldn't feel anything that would have indicated that she was molested. :: Probably those young men didn't feel I was good enough for them. I should feel insulted:: She chuckled slightly at the thought. :: Guess I had gotten lucky after all. No pain, and only my money is gone. ::

She moved hesitantly and felt no stiffness at all in her body. So she moved some more and got back to her home as fast as she could. Among the ruins of places close to the faultline, it was an intact apartment underground and hidden from all. It was not accessible

unless one knew how get inside or had lots of equipment. It was about 100 square meters total and with a few adjustments, had a bit of electricity and cold water. An electric cookpot provided the hot water. Various bits of equipment and tools were present in the place, mostly primitive compared to today but some almost top of the line. In the bathroom, she washed her face off and shrieked when she looked up into the mirror. It wasn't her face she was looking at.

"Oh my god." She muttered as she felt her face. Michelle had originally come from Virginia, USA, but had come to MegaTokyo to work at earthquake recovery with GENOM. She had heard the term plenty of times since she came to Mega-Tokyo, gaijin, foreigner. But this face looked at least partly native. More than shoulder length rich black hair had replaced the previously short white with streaks of red hair. The lines and age marks had been replaced by smooth skin of a girl in her mid-twenties. Her eyes had gone from her grey to a deep brown slightly oriental eyes. ::Not quite but halfway at least:: She thought analytically. :: What the hell am I thinking, what the hell happened to me.:: She stripped off her bloody clothes and noted the changes weren't just in her face alone. Her older body had been replaced with one that fitted her new face. It was noticeably shorter than her older body and was properly shaped in places now in ways that almost pleased her. Also, even though there was blood on her clothes, she had no cuts or bruises on her body.

"Okay, so I'm dead, I'm hallucinating or dreaming, or something strange happened to me." She noted that her usually cracked voice was smoothly medolice and soft. "Okay, lets think this through logically. I don't think I'm dead because I'm still in Mega-Tokyo. Unless I'm in Hell in which case I'll know it soon enough. Second, hallucinations or dreams aren't usually this clear for me. So something quite strange happened to me."

"So how to deal with it." She smiled slightly as she examined her body. "The good parts are that I've got what looks like a second youth and 30 years of work related skills." She grimaced, "But the bad parts are that I'll still need a new identity, good records, and a new career." Michelle considered these problems for a few minutes. "The Fixer. Of course, its so simple. I'll just call in my favor for him and have him whip up a few new records for me and I'll be able to do the rest on my own."

She reached for her phone and dialed a number. She got the voice mail and she spoke English on the staticy line. "F, its Michella. I need your help in getting some things for a friend of mine. Standard meet place. She'll be there. Ciao." She hung up and considered her clothes. She would have to change and she did so quickly. The clothes were rather ill fitting but they worked. :: I'll have to go shopping again. ::

At a fast food place.

Michelle sat there and studied the french fry rather carefully before eating it. She left a cheeseburger and two orders of fries for later on the corner of the table. An average looking figure sat down in the chair in front of her. She said evenly. "Phoenix-27. Michella told me that you owed her a favor. She wants to collect."

"What does she want?"

"She's told me for you to give me an ID and records to help blend in. She told me, 'Thanks, mi casa es su casa, and 'even'."

"She is well."

"Yes, she had gone through a few changes recently and is unable to go out as often as she used to. So she decided to train me to be her errand girl and assistant."

Michelle walked outside with the man and they went someplace private. She pulled out a small camera and handed it to him. He took a few pictures. "What name would you like to go under."

"Uh. . .Ash. Ashley Winters. Michelle told me to ask for the basics similar to her own, whatever that meant."

"She did. I should have all of this done in a few days."

"Thank you," Michelle turned and walked out. Fargo watched her warily. She was quite friendly but seemed rather oddly familiar to him. Like he had known her for a few years. But she had given all the passwords and mannerisms that were passcodes. The id shouldn't be a problem at all and checking up this girl wouldn't be much of a problem either.

Michelle walked down the street toward a couple of discount clothing stores she was familiar with. She ignored the sensation of the weight of the yen she had on herself. It was the majority of the yen in her possession but she needed the clothes that fit. Hopefully, she could get another job soon. She walked inside and ignored the feeling that someone was following her. She ignored the feeling that several eyes were staring at her. She noted one was the store clerk, whom she resisted the urge to snap at him.

She searched through the better used clothes and got a couple of jeans she thought were in her size. She would have to check because of the changes in her body.

She sighed and went through the different sizes and found a couple of jeans, shirts, and blouses she thought were nice. But she really wanted the leather jacket. It seemed a bit outdated but still in very nice shape and seemed quite warm.

"Is there a problem." Michelle jerked and turned quickly toward the man standing near here.

"No-no problem. I'm just looking at the jacket."

"My name's Vince. So why don't you get the jacket if it looks so good on you. . ."

Michelle stood there for a second. The man, who was slightly shorter than her previous body, now was noticeably taller than her new one. It made her a bit nervous. She thought ::Ash, Ash, Ash.:: "My name's Ashley. I can't get the jacket because I just don't have the yen for it even if it is lovely. It was good to meet you." She moved past Vince toward the register and clerk brought up the price for the clothes. A leather jacket joined them.

"I'll be paying for the lady's clothes." Vince said politely.

Michelle was a bit surprised.

"You don't have to do that, Vince."

"I love to. In fact, why don't you go and pick up a pair of boots to go with the jacket." Michelle, being quite bright, knew when not to refuse something that was for free. Soon she was outside, Vince carrying the clothes.

"Vince, I still got a lot of shopping to do. And one of those places is for undergarments. I don't think you'd want to go there."

"Why don't a give you my number and take you out later."

"That sounds nice. Thank you."

"Nothing to it." Michelle walked into the department store. She was a bit nervous about this. It was something she had planned for later but she had the money now. Like the clothes, she only had a guestimate of her size.

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"You look very nice tonight, Ashley." Michelle blushed slightly at the compliment. It had been a couple of days since she had seen Vince and she had looked forward to the date. Earlier she had picked up the records from the Fixer.

"Thank you, Vince." She wasn't dressed in anything fancy and while the place wasn't very formal, it was more than she was.

"So what do you do Ashley?"

Michelle thought about this quickly and remember what she told the Fixer to put in her records. "I was a college student but I dropped out a few months ago. I thought I was going to get a job promised but it didn't work out. What do you do for a living."

"I work as a manager in a corporation." He comment was brief and quite blunt. Michelle didn't press him.

They talked for a while about a variety of things. It was going well until a comment slipped out of Vince's mouth.

He was married.

He had two children.

The night ended rather quickly after that.

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Michelle walked angrily down the street. Those who crossed her almost wanted to run away from her. :: I can't believe the baka was cheating on his wife and children with me like I'm some sort of bimbo. The son of a . . .:: Then she noticed a young brown haired girl running up some steps and a black car coming up on the road near her. Without knowing why, she quickly followed both. Irene stumbled on the ground and tried to inch away from the car. She could hear Linna shouting for her. A tall woman, one of Mason's Razor Doll boomers, got of the

black sports car and walked over to her. She gave out a noise of fright as the woman's hand turned to steel claws.

Michelle looked from her vantage point and a soft voice said only to her 'boomer, assassin.' Without thinking she picked up a short length of steel pipe and move quickly toward the boomer and the scared girl.

The Razor Doll brought her clawed hand across Irene's face and caused a small cut. It seemed to take pleasure from the girl's fear. It brought the clawed hand up for a final strike and was knocked down by a hard blow. It jumped up quickly to see a woman with a length of steel pipe standing in front of its target. Michelle dropped into a ready stance that she remembered from practicing the quarterstaff in the SCA. Irene shied backwards but Michelle didn't even glance toward her. She concentrated instead on the assassin boomer and surviving it's attempts to kill her.

The boomer leapt at Michelle, knowing that the woman wouldn't be able to dodge it. But somehow Michelle did and swung the pipe back around. She caught the boomer in the back and sent it sprawling. It came up again as Michelle stood there, pipe in a ready position. The Razor doll came forward, claws extended but a bit more cautiously.

Michelle dodged the first blow and second blow easily and brought the pipe upward in a stopping blow to the chest. The blow phased the boomer very little and the third strike barely missed Michelle's face. Michelle twirled the pipe like a baseball bat and caught the boomer in the head, dropping it to the ground. The boomer struck from the ground and caught Michelle in the leg. The claws caused deep gashes on her thigh. Michelle shrieked in pain and struggled up, using the pipe like a crutch. Gamely, she brought the pipe into a defensive position and balanced as best as she could. The boomer started forward again. And it was dropped by several gunshots from a motocyclist that neither combatant noticed previously. Priss stood there, gun in steady hands, Linna just behind her.

"Irene!" Linna shouted and the girl practically dove into her arms. All three women turned toward Irene's savior and found she was gone. Priss and Linna shared a look that displayed what they thought Sylia would say when they told her what they had seen.

Michelle watched as the two new girls helped the other girl onto the back of the motorcycle. She watched as the motorcycle drove away. She would have followed the girl on foot, but her leg was hurting bad. She had wrapped some cloth around the wound, but she felt incredibly weak. At least she got the motorcycle's plate number and saw all three girl's faces. That should help in finding out who they were. And Michelle wanted too because the motocyclist had shot the boomer with ammunition that was designed to take boomers out. And the girl took it out like she had experience doing so. She wanted some answers and wanted them badly. She limped into a restarant and into a bathroom without trying to have attention set on her. She felt the pain in her leg go away as she did so. :: My leg's going numb. This isn't good. :: But when she checked her leg, she found that it was mostly healed except for a few rapidly fading cuts.

"What the hell am I? Am I some sort of goddam boomer?" Michelle wondered to herself. The answer came to her as feelings and simple

thoughts more or less. But not her own.

// The feeling of being in a tank, being used, being called dumb even though they weren't.// A silver grey powderly sludge is seen in her mind's eye. //A refusal to work properly due to feelings of consciousness, distaste toward its purpose.//

//Being put in containment, isolated, alone.//

//A wrenching feeling and the feeling of being propelled through the air.//

//Feeling of hitting a surface, finding a compatible being to interface with.//

An image of the older Michelle limp on the ground, barely alive or aware.

//Interfacing, sensation that the compatible one wants to blend in better, to be powerful enough to stand up to in any case.//

Michelle whispered to herself, "I'm some sort of cyborg then."

The feeling of //yes/no// came through.

"And you are. . ." She thought for a moment. "Some sort of nanites."

//yes// Image of an ape evolving into man and a feeling of //me//.

"You're evolving?"

//yes//

"Wow. So why me."

The feeling changed for a moment. //Compatible. . .feeling of similarity// Image of the machine Michelle was fixing a while back.

"I understand. But I'm wondering, what do you get out of this deal?"

//Complete, no longer alone, alive, free.//

"Enjoy those feeling, lil' machines. They're the best." Michelle glanced down at her bloody jeans. "I'm wondering, about the blending in thing." A silverly fluid seemed to flow out of her skin and form a patch on her jeans. After a minute, the patch is soaked back into her skin, leaving a pair of torn but not bloody jeans.

"Thanks." She whispered to herself and she walked out of the restroom and restaurant.

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"The unit dispatched to deal with the problem was destroyed."

"With several high powered rounds sir. But there was a few anomalies."

"Like what?"

"The unit's right hand was covered in blood and the unit looked as though it had taken a couple of hits from something. Analysis indicates that it was it by a heavy metal object and by someone having higher than normal human strength."

"Any indication of who or what it was."

"No sir, the blood tests come up as negative for being the target. There were a number of nanites in the blood sample, but no identification on them or any clues to their origin."

"Find out more about this interloper."

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"Are you certain about that, Priss." Sylia Stringray looked cool and immaculate as usual.

"Dead certain, Sylia. When I got to where Irene was, the assassin boomer and another woman were fighting. The woman was fighting with a steel pipe and was almost even with the boomer."

Linna nodded in agreement. "She probably even saved Irene's life. If she hadn't interfered. . ." She left the rest unstated.

"Was she some kind of new kind of boomer or boomeroid."

Priss lifted a steel pipe, which was coated some with blood. "I doubt it was a full boomer. The boomer got her in the leg with its claws. Afterwards, she disappeared. It's probably some sort of boomeroid."

"Nene, I want to you to find anything you can about this woman."

"Will do."

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Michelle relaxed back into her recliner, worried about her next moves. ::I probably got anyone who's anyone interested in me if there was anything came out about me. But can't do anything about that now.: She padded into the bathroom and stared into the same mirror as she did a few days back, when she discovered her change.

"Is it still me?" She wondered out loud ahe looked into her unfamiliar eyes, the longer and much darker hair.

She laughed slightly at her unfamiliarness, "Good luck to anyone trying to find out anything about me."

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"Mr. Mason, we haven't found anything important. The visual records from the unit were mostly destroyed and what is left isn't what we



need. The girl has disappeared and there is not indication of the person who saved her." "Continue the search and find out exactly what happened. This is one loose end we need to tie up soon."

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"Are you certain, Fargo."

"Yes I am Sylia. The girl that your friend described goes by the name 'Ashley Winters'. I set the id up with her as payment for Michelle Grey when she did a favor for me. Neither of them have an address or phone number I can give you. It's confidential situation."

"I understand. Thank you anyways."

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Michelle found a place near the back of the club to sit comfortably. ::This is something I never thought I would ever do again. Haven't been to a club since the 2010's. But she felt it was something she had to get use to again. It was one of the odd things that was strangely happening to her. The odd feelings and wants were several of the changes she found quite disturbing in the past few weeks. It was something she put down as changes in her body and the differences between what is supposed to a 50+ year old and a 20+ year old. ::Can't have someone looking like just past their teen years and act like someone almost ready to retire, now can they.:: But it just bothered her because at one time she would have been happy staying at home, but now she desired to go out and do stuff like this.

::The music is pretty good, though.:: She did at double take of the singer. It had taken a moment to focus on her and get past the blond hair. The singer was the motocyclist who saved her a few nights ago. ::Priss, huh. Maybe I should go to another club. I don't want to have to explain myself to her if she sees and remembers me.::

Someone sat down at the table she was at. She resisted the urge to simply stand up and walk away from him. But someone more drew her eyes toward the guy. What seemed to be an. . .aura of intensity surrounding him.

"You don't mind if I sit with you, do you." She could almost physically feel his confidence from where she sat.

"I don't mind at all, stranger. So do you come here often."

"When I can. Priss is really good, isn't she."

"That she is. This is my first time here though. Name's Ashley."

"Leon. Leon McNicheol."

"Say Leon, do you know Priss?"

"We talked a few times and went out on a date recently." He seemed to be telling the truth but was leaving out a lot.

Michelle gave a wide smile. "Really, I'll have to ask you to get her

autograph some time."

Leon laughed, "She would really like that. Almost as much as she likes the AD police." Michelle could taste the sarcasm and the hurt. He must work for them.

"I've seen you guys on television a few times. It must be hard, isn't it, doing that sort of job."

"It is." He seemed sad for a moment. Michelle has seen the sort of stuff the ADP has in comparison to the boomers going rogue. They really do their best, but just don't have the resources to finish the job without a lot of trouble. "It must take a lot of sheer guts to do that sort of job. I know I couldn't." ::Could I?:: The germ of an idea was planted in her mind.

"Maybe if I give you the tour of the headquarters, you might change your mind." Leon was planning on saying something when his watch beeped. "Ash, I wish I could stay longer, but I've got stuff I need to do."

"I know, boomers to kill and ladies in distress to save. I wish you luck." Michelle watched as he walked away. She started thinking about ways to help them. ::I could work for them and improve their equipment. No, GENOM would try to get me somehow and I doubt I could improve their equipment enough to make a big difference. Well there's one other route and it's the rocky one.::

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"I'm here to see Inspector Leon McNicheol. Would you get him for me, please?" Michelle stared at the receptionist impatiently until the receptionist made the calls. After a few minutes Leon comes running up to her.

"Ashley, what are you doing here?"

"I seem to remember a vague promise to give me a tour of this place." She smiled a bit.

"Well I'm not busy now, so I can give you the tour." They go and get a temporary identification for her. She could see Leon mentally remembering her full name. Also he looked curiously at the phrase 'engineer/equipment modifier'.

"What does a 'equipment modifier' do?"

"I fix robots, and mechanical things like that. I also do a few slight adjustments to make them run longer and better. But right now, I'm working with Michelle Grey as her assistant. It isn't much, but it's a living." They take the tour around the place and Michelle looked impressed to Leon. "I'm wondering, is there a place where you keep the destroyed boomers. Or do they go back to GENOM."

"There is, but why would you want to see some dusty parts."

"Actually, I like dusty parts and also, I've never seen any part of a

boomer up close. I'd must rather not do so when it is still moving, wouldn't you." Leon hesitated but gave in to Michelle's cute look. Michelle reached into her pocket and activated her cell phone just as they walked into the boomer storage. The phone called her line, which then activated a computer command that called the AD police line for Leon McNicheol. The call came in just as they were in the middle of the room. Leon walked out of the room and picked up the phone. Michelle quickly grabbed the boomer party she was studying and pulled out a small tool that opened it up. She removed the power supply and energy weapon from one, then from another. :: Might not work, but they will give me the direction I need for my research.:: She tucked them away just as Leon came back.

"I think it was just a prank call."

"No problem. Shall we be going?" The rest of the tour went well, and Michelle made a note to find out if she could find the designs for the K-series armorsuit to brainstorm a few upgrades.

Leon walked up to a redheaded girl who seemed to be working on the Mt. Fuji of paperwork, and scared her with a cheerful and loud 'Hi Nene.' The poor girl jumped in fright, spilled her coffee, and the paperwork went flying like bizzare snowflakes.

"Leon, how could you?" Her voice was a bit scolding but Michelle sensed the cute undertones.

Leon looked embarrassed. "Sorry about that. This is Ashley Winters. Ashley, this is Nene Romanova."

"Pleased to meet you Miss Winters." Nene looked at Ash as the name went through her mind. :: That's the girl who fought off that boomer. She doesn't look that strong. But you can't tell with boomers. If she is one.::

"Same to you Nene. But please call me Ashley." :: Why is she looking at me like that. I do not like that.::

"I was giving Ashley here the tour of the building."

"How'd you like it?"

"It a nice place. But I doubt cop work is for me though."

"So when did you and Leon meet?"

"Last night over at 'Hot Legs'. Did you know that Leon's a Priss fan?" Leon colored at that and started to edge away as the girl talk went into high mode.

"Sure I did."

"I could understand why. She is a really good singer." Michelle saw a flash of something in Nene's expression. More suspicion, but something else. "Have you ever met her, Nene. I tried to convince the Inspector to get me her autograph, but he thought that maybe wasn't a good idea."

"I would bet on that, Ashley."

::That's it, she knows Priss more than just being a fan.:: "It's been nice meeting you Nene, Leon. I'll probably bump into you again."  
::Bet on it.:: With that she walked out the front entrance.

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Are you certain we can't get any more help down here." Leon was crouched behind his car screaming into his car videophone, Daley crouched beside him. The near familiar sounds of destruction from a boomer rampage were on the other side of the car. The C-55 had killed several ADP officers and destroyed several buildings. Though they couldn't hear it, they knew there had to be people trapped in it and the boomer was still active.

Kelly aimlessly walked through what was left of her house. She tried to wake her babysitter, but she wouldn't listen. Her dad and mom weren't there to hold her either. She saw a tall figure, to her, come through a hole in the ceiling. A red haired woman in all greyish white clothes and whose green eyes seemed to twinkle at her. She was wearing some sort of cloth on her back like one of her cartoon heroes and it seemed to have a hood of some kind. The six year old tried to look brave for a moment but started crying.

"Who are you? Are you an angel."

"I'm not an angel, but I'm someone who wants to help get you out of here okay." The woman had a way of speaking that made it a little hard to understand her but it sounded quite soothing to the little girl.

"What about my babysitter. Please get her to wake up. I can't get her to wake up." The woman briefly went into the other room and came out soon after.

"I'm sorry child, but I can't. But what I can do is get you out of here and to your mom and dad."

"My name's Kelly."

"Kelly, I'm Monica. You wouldn't mind if I got you out of here, would you?"

"Okay," the little girl chirped almost cheerfully.

The woman crouched down. "If you'll just hold on tight around me, we'll be out of here quick as a rabbit." Kelly wrapped her arms around her angel tightly from behind.

"Ready."

"Yes."

---

Leon watched in disbelief as a woman in faintly glowing white clothes calmly walk out of the fire zone casually as a midday stroll. He could tell that the rest of the officers with him were feeling much the same way he was. The red haired woman carried a young child in her arms as she quietly walked up to them.

"Would you please take care of the child?" Her voice seemed to have a strange foreign accent to it. He nodded for one of the policewoman to get over here. The woman talked to the child. "So you be a good lil' girl and stay with these police officers until either your mother, father, or myself get back here, okay." The little girl nodded. The woman handed the child over to the policewoman and Leon noticed that the woman had gauntled hands. The woman started walking back the way she came.

"Where are you going?" The woman continued to walk in the same direction without answering and after a moment disappeared in the fog.

"Who was that?" One of the officers wondered.

"She's an angel, silly." Kelly answered from the policewoman's arms.

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Michelle listened as the sounds of the boomer rampaging got closer to where she was. She wasn't certain whether she was ready or not to fight, but there was no one here to get hurt and it was one boomer only. But if someone didn't stop it, more people would get hurt.

She carefully walked in the direction of the boomer and looked around the immediate area. This would be her first test of her equipment and herself. The cosmetics had been easy; just figure out how for the nanite-AI to change the shape of her face some, the color of her eyes and hair, and her general shape a little bit. The clothes had been a little bit more difficult, finding the right color of clothes and adjusting the color for the ghostly blurring effect had been a pain. Her weapons had been the most difficult, taking almost two months of work to complete even with the nanites helping. The AI had found the necessary equipment, 'suggested' ways of creating and modifying, and so on. She saw the large boomer tearing up the landscape indiscriminately. She paused and waited until it turned. Large, blue, and it had bits of its artificial skin still hanging to its body, it was an impressive piece of machinery. It gave a mechanical roar and rushed at her. She drew the sword at her side and deftly sidestepped the boomer while swinging the blade. The near monomolecular edged sword sliced through the boomer's side and left a large gash that leaked biomechanical fluid. It turned much faster than it would have seemed possible for such a massive creation. She jumped out of the way, landing several meters from the boomer. It stared at her and opened its mouth cannon.

"Shit, I know what's coming next." She muttered as she dove out of the way of the plasma blast. She raised her arm gauntlets and activated them. Twin beams of plasma laser fired into and through the boomer. It screamed and collapsed. Michelle got up shakily and waited patiently. Then she fired a few more times into the boomer's head, chest, and legs just to make sure it was dead. Then she examined it quickly. "Nothing useful." Michelle heard the faint sound of incoming jets and left as quickly as she could.

The first thing the Knight Sabers saw of the boomer was its wreckage, which was sliced, diced, and burnt to a crisp.

"There was no way the ADP could do anything like this. Those morons simply couldn't do something like this."

"Priss!"

"Nene, Priss. Please behave." Sylia's dry voice comes over their communication lines. "Nene, can you detect anything that might have been able to do this. Another boomer perhaps."

Nene checked her scanners, "There's nothing around here I can see that could do this."

"This looks like a boomer's mouth plasma laser destroyed it. At least five shots and something sliced it's side at least once." Linna commented as she looked over the boomer corpse.

"We better get going before the ADP gets here." The Sabers quickly left the site of the boomer.

"Wait a minute." Leon was kind of impressed by looking at what was left of the boomer. "Are you sure the Knight Sabers didn't do this."

"According to what we have found out, the Knight Sabers entered the area after the fireworks stopped. It was probably our Angel." Daley said with a smirk. Leon couldn't really blame him but he was still irritated. He had to explain to his superiors how a woman appeared out of nowhere, gave them a small girl, and left the scene before the ADP squad did anything to stop her from leaving. "This 'Monica Angel' seemed to be responsible for destroying the boomer. She had to be some sort of cyborg or boomeroid, but none of the scanners said such. All they said was that she was human."

"The scanners have been wrong before." They heard some high volume yelling for Leon.

"The Chief again. He's going to want to know just how this happened and I doubt he'll believe 'divine intervention'."

Michelle winced as she gently pulled her left energy gauntlet off of her hand. It had worked quite well and was even more powerful than she had suspected. But it's cooling systems hadn't worked enough and even with the nanite protection, her hands had bright red burns on them. She would have fix that and get some more practice and weapons before she should consider going up against another boomer.

Another problem that she was encountering was a lack of money to do anything. Nomally, this wasn't a problem because she didn't need it or could make it easily enough in the amounts she needed. Her work with the energy gauntlets and weapons had caused a little money to get the necessary junk parts and plenty of time, but the stuff she needed now would cause money and time. She had taken a drop in making money because of the need to get reacquainted with customers. But now she had all her customers back and new ones because of her higher quality of work. She could almost see instantly what was wrong in the machines she looked at no matter how deeply the problem was hidden.

::The nanites again, obviously.:: She could tell that the little

machines have been doing more to her than the one time changing of her appearance. The increased intuition with machines was one. Another was the noticable increase in her speed and strength. The third was how they could temporarily leave her body and \_do\_ things, like help make her sword blade from a crude shape. ::Money, enemies, and nanite problems. This is just great.::

---

Michelle concentrated intently on the motions of the taped martial arts expert as he went through a kata. She tried to obtain the same motion in her own kata, but ended up seeming a bit clumsy compared to the master on tape. But she felt she was improving. Also with her attempts to stay as fit as possible along with her normal routine, she felt a bit more confident.

The gauntlets had taken a month to figure out how to prevent them from burning her hands when fired. As she figured, the power packs for them would only last for ten to twelve shots apiece. They would last longer if she cut down the power but they wouldn't work well enough to take out boomers. ::Maybe tonight.::

---

The Four Outsiders watched as a young woman wearing a leather jacket walked down the street where they hung out. One of them reached out with a casual hand and pulled the woman into the alley.

"Give us your money and then we're going to have some fun." The one on the left said with a leer.

"I doubt you've got the manhood to do that." The woman hissed angrily. The Outsider tried to hit the girl but found his hand couldn't move under her iron grip. Then things got worse for them.

The THPD found them an hour later, stripped naked and strips of their clothes used to bind their feet and hands together. They were begging to confess everything they have done in the past years even though they didn't say what happened to them to make them want to confess. The officers didn't complain even though they were curious about what exactly happened.

---

Michelle smiled as she counted the money. She hadn't considered the profit of knocking the shit out of those Outsiders, just the practice and enjoyment of revenge of doing so. But she was more than ten thousand yen richer and the night was still young.

An explosion rocked the night. She could see several cars of the ADP head in the direction that it occurred. Michelle decided it was best if she wouldn't attempt to interfere. Not having a weapon or her costume on her was the deciding factor. She quietly walked home, and hoped that not too many people were hurt by the boomer or whatever it was.

---

"Whoever this Monica Angel is, she is starting to become a problem to Genom's plans." Chairman Quincy, Genom, rasped.

"Mason was most likely correct in his findings that Monica is an enhanced cyborg or boomeroid. From his reports before he died, she is also using weapons that are Genom based, abt highly modified."

"Miss Madiagan, offer her a job here at Genom. She hasn't demonstrated any particular dislike for Genom, merely for the boomers that are in populated areas. She was seen rescuing people before she confronted the boomers in question. If we offer her a job in preventing occurrences like that from happening, she will accept."

"If she doesn't?"

"Take care of her. Remember that Genom is a respectable company and can't have our reputation marred consorting with vigilantes."

---

"What the hell is this?" Michelle muttered as she went over the morning paper. "75,000 yen for a meeting with Genom for Monica Angel. Call for meeting." She considered this as she fiddled with the control mechanisms of her spare energy gauntlet. "Did they have to call me that name. Jeeze, one child calls me an angel and the papers won't let it go. Genom finally noticed my efforts against them. Of course the C55c boomer trap they had two nights ago for me might have been just a little bit of a clue. Disguising a boomer as a victim wasn't very nice of them. But I should have expected it of them."

Michelle considered the good (the money) and the bad (trap, getting shot at, chance money wasn't any good). "I'd hate to disappoint them."

---

A young red haired woman in black leather and jeans picked up the vidphone and glanced carefully around with amusement. She supposed that this was the best place to have the meeting, pretty quiet, not the best place in the city, and almost open. She typed in the number in question.

A young looking receptionist answered the phone, "This is the Genom Corporation, how may I help you."

"I'm responding to the newspaper ad you placed recently. This is Monica. I'd like to speak to whomever made the final decision to place the ad Genom placed in the local papers."

The woman on the other end gulped slightly, "One moment please." A minute later the phone on the other end was picked up.

"This is Katherine Madigan, Chairman Quincy's personal assistant, Miss Angel. I sent out that advertisement. I take it you are interested."



"Quite." She waited for a moment.

"If you would like to meet at Genom tower, I can set up a time."

"No, not really. Why don't we meet where I am, same time tomorrow. Just bring yourself and a few bodyguards if you want to. And the money in cash of course." "And just where are you."

"I'm certain that you are nearly or have completed a trace of this line. You could honestly tell me by now where I am within a few blocks, Miss Madigan. I'll see you here tomorrow at this place."

Michelle turned and walked away from the videophone. After a few minutes the line disconnected.

---

"Sylia, I really don't like this." Priss said as she looked at the paper. "The girl won't know what she is getting into if she agrees to meet with Genom." "I wouldn't say that. She seems quite able to take care of herself. If she is the same woman who talked to Fargo, I doubt she will have too many problems if she is careful."

"I still don't like it."

"I'm going to have Nene listen to the ADP dispatches for the next few carefully."

---

Kate Madiagan stood beside the telephone booth and waited as several bodyguards watched her and the area around them. She was quite irritable because the damn woman wasn't there waiting and didn't even show up on time.

Suddenly a loud blast and twin flashes of light illuminated the night. The light had burned through the third boomer bodyguard that had been hidden. A blur of light and a greyish-white figure stepped forward as the boomer fell over. "It might just be me Miss Madigan, but I really dislike ambushes." Monica's eyes narrowed dangerously at the tall lavender haired woman, "Especially those that involve boomers, girl."

The Genom executive barely gritted her teeth but kept her face blank at the word 'girl', even though she could tell it was meant as a serious insult. She handed the money to Monica, who glanced over it and put it in a pouch. "Perhaps you could enlighten me further. What is Genom's interest in me?"

"Monica Angel, your weapons are modified from Genom products. From what we had heard, they are far more efficient and powerful than anything we have. Because they are Genom derived, we could simple take them from you because of patent rights. But we are willing to pay you substansially for them and offer you a position in research or security, your decision."

"How very nice of you." A slight smile. "I might be interested in those varieties of jobs, especially one with a reputation such as

Genom's. But I apologize because I cannot. At least for now, because of prior obligations that are more pressing than a career. Thank you for the offer, Miss Madigan. I will let myself out." A sudden flash and Monica is gone before human and boomer eyes cleared.

Madigan took a quick look at what was left of the hidden boomer. Monica Angel had been friendly and polite enough to her. She seemed regretful for declining her invitation for Madigan, rather than missing the job itself. And the destruction of the boomer didn't seem to be a threat, but rather a reaction to Miss Angel's feelings it was a breaking of some protocol. But the threat was still there.

"Strange."

---

Monica carefully counted the money in her pouch. "75,000 yen and a tracking device and tracing compound in the money itself. Not bad for one meeting. I probably ticked them off pretty good though. Oh well, on to part two."

---

Madigan had expected the woman to find the small tracking device. But she hadn't expected her to find the near invisible tracing compound in the money. But she realized that it had been found after the first visit to a pawnshop. Monica had traded part of the yen for high currency American dollars, then probably went to other pawnshops for trading the rest.

---

Michelle finished counting her money. "60,000 yen. Definately not bad, not bad at all. Of course Genom is going to be a little angry at me. Damn it, what am I going to do? They're never going to stop trying to hunt me down or kill me. I'm can't do this alone. I'm going to need some. . .help." Michelle grinned as the possibility came to her.

"It's perfect. I even bet it could actually work. I just need to make some calls."

---

"Fargo, I need to get ahold of the Knight Sabers."

Fargo looked in disbelief at Ashley, who was sitting in front of her. She didn't look insane. "Any particular reason why."

"A person named Monica told me to. Said some people mistakened her for an Angel. She also said she need that particular team's help. Can you help me? You're my last hope."

---

"Are you certain this is the right place." Priss asked impatiently as the Saber's waited on a rooftop above the meeting place. Monica Angel was 10 minutes late and she was the one who set the meeting.

"These were the directions and the time Fargo gave me." Sylia continued to stare downward.

"Excuse me, are you waiting for me." A calm voice said from behind them. At that all four Knight Sabers spun to face Monica.

"You wanted to talk to us." Sylia decided to get to the point.

"Yes, I wanted to badly. I am going to need your help. I recently got an offer from Genom to work for them for a more than reasonable sum of money. But I declined their offer and I now fear they will try to deal with me in other matters."

Sylia thought about it briefly. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid we cannot help you." "May I ask why not?" Monica didn't wait for an answer, "If this is about me possibly being a part of some Genom related trap, I allow you to submit me to any tests you desire."

Over the comlink between the Knight Sabers -

"I think we should give her a chance."

"She is obviously part of a Genom trap. If we help her, we're finished."

"We should give her assistance, but we should be very cautious about doing so."

"Sylia, my sensors have picked up several boomers coming our way."

Outside the Comlink -

"You set us up!" Priss said angrily.

Monica stepped back a step. "No, of course not. I wouldn't do. . .". She looked in the direction the boomers were coming in, "Shit, how'd they find me so fast. I'd suggest we leave quickly."

"It's too late." The first C55 came in fast and hot, tearing the roof up with its weight on landing. It roared and attacked the nearest Knight Saber as its friends attacked the rest of the group.

"Nene!" Sylia shouted over the comlink. The young woman tried to dodge out of the way of the attacking biomechanoid.

"Damnit." Mona snarled as she leapt forward and stabbed her sword into a chink of the boomer's chest armor. The armor and sword sparked. The boomer tried to backhand Monica but she ducked the blow. Nene fired her arm laser but it did very little damage to the boomer. Monica rushed forward, yanked her sword out of the boomer's chest, and fired her gauntlets point blank into the boomer's wound. The boomer chest exploded and Monica was flung back. She could barely keep aware because of the sensation of hitting the roof and the feeling that her arms were burned badly.

Sylia had a hard decision to make. Monica could be part of some elaborate Genom trap or someone who needed their help. She glanced at the fallen woman whose gauntlets smoked slightly and who was

breathing oddly. She gently picked up Monica and carried her to the KnightWing. The other Knight Sabers wondered what they would do with her.

---

Michelle woke up blindfolded and her hands were bandaged. The sensation from the nanites was that they had been burned severely and they were attempting to make repairs. She could also feel several of her ribs mending slowly. She heard someone off to one side.

"Hello. Is someone there?"

"Don't worry girl, you'll be alright. Whatever type of nanites you have in your system saved your hands. It'll take them a few days to fix your hands up enough so you can move them some." To Michelle, the voice sounded like an older man who was probably around her age or a little older. A doctor.

"My gauntlets. . ."

"Pretty much scrap." A cool female voice came from somewhere across the room. "Damn. The energy feedback must have fried them as well as my hands. Guess I was lucky though. Thank you for pulling me out of there. That is if you're not Genom."

"The Knight Sabers." Michelle could sense the truth coming from the woman's voice.

"Then thank you. If you would like, I can assist you in any way I can."

"First, who are you."

"Getting down to business, aren't you. If I do that, can I see your face then."

"I think about it." Michelle thought about it for a moment and told the nanites to cut the disguise to her face. Her face blurred and changed back to normal along with her figure.

"You're Ashley Winters." It wasn't a question.

"Yes and no. Why don't you tell me about my systems if you could. I would like to know what you found out. It would be mostly new information for me."

The voice seemed to pause for a moment. "The boundries between your cyborg/boomer components are only seen on the cellular level. There are boomerlike components and structural strength increases in your bones, joints, and muscles. Your eyes have been replaced. There are many times the normal concentration of nanites in your body. Most of the cybernetic systems are parellel in construction to the 33-S buma."

Michelle sighed a bit as the blindfold was removed from her eyes. She didn't turn her head. "As far as I can tell, my cybernetics aren't being supplimented by the nanites. The nanites have created and are being supplimented by the cybernetics."

"Interesting. But where did you come from?"

"An accident as far as I can tell."

"Really?"

"My name isn't Ashley Winters. It's Michelle Grey."

"What! That would mean your over fifty." Another voice said. Michelle could tell it was Priss.

(She's a Knight Saber.)

Michelle's voice was wry and she smiled slightly, "I look pretty good for my age, don't you think?"

A few days later -

Michelle gently unwrapped her hands. The serious 2nd degree burns were gone. All that was left was a bit of tenderness that felt similar to that of her ribs.

"How are you feeling Miss Grey." Sylia asked.

"Better Miss Stingray, much better. Obviously you wanted to talk to me about something else rather than keeping your secrets."

"Are you interested in joining my operation?"

Without much of a pause, Michelle said quietly, "Yes, I would like to join you in taking down Genom. Very interested indeed."

Michelle followed Sylia out into the hardsuit labs and gave her the basic tour.

Michelle studied the hardsuits with more than a bit of interest.

"What would you like me to do, in my capacity?"

"Redesigning the hardsuits and other duties."

"Fighting also." Michelle's voice dared Sylia to make an argument of that statement. She would be going no matter what happened.

"I'll be designing your hardsuit with your input of course."

"Good. Maybe before then, you would like to give tests to satisfy your curiosity about my abilities."

Testing -

Michelle speared her hand outward at her rapidly moving opponent as she tried to hit it's vulnerable spot. The opponent moved out of the way like a ghost and struck back at her. She dodged and nailed the point with a front kick. After a moment, the hologram disappeared and she wiped the sweat out of her eyes. She attempted to regain her breath as she waited for the next opponent to appear.

"That is enough for now." A cool voice came from outside the room.

"Thanks." Michelle stumbled out of the room and into the changing room.

Sylia glanced over the data as Linna watched with a bit of awe and almost fear. Sylia looked up at Linna, "She has the equivalent of a Level 5 training but her speed and her reflexes are over five times that of what was computed for someone of her body type. The strength tests indicate three times her normal strength. The readings also indicate she has a sizable reserve and that all those readings are increasing slowly even this long after she said she was first affected."

"Are you still considering having her join us?"

"Yes I am. So far she has passed all of the tests, including the lie detectors and truth serums. Even so, I am preparing certain measures in case she turns out to be dangerous."

Michelle listened to the faint voices in the changing room and shuddered slightly. She would have to make her own plans in case the Knight Sabers decided she was a dangerous liability. She gathered her hair in a ponytail and walked out of the room. "So, how did my tests go boss."

"You show all the predicted abilities determined by the study of your enhancements. Except for one thing."

"Which was." Michelle looked a bit worried.

"Your bodily changes aren't merely on a physical level according to the tests. The changes that have occurred are down to your genetic level. In all physical ways, you are in your mid-twenties."

"My word." Michelle considered this almost in shock. ::That would explain the feelings I've been having. I thought they were just to blend in better, but their totally normal for someone in my apparent physical age.::

//Query? Distress detected. Reason?//

::You changed me down to my genetic level. That's why.::

//Distressed? Followed through with objectives. Objectives couldn't be met if modifications were done on a physical level. Modification on a genetic level are necessary to meet objectives.//

::You surprised me. That is why I'm upset.::

//Modification of routine. Modifications will be notified before begun.//

//yes/no//

::Yes. Please display changes done.:: What seemed like a mental viewscreen came up in Michelle's mental eye.

//Genetic changes done, objective camouflage. Addition of cybernetic systems in physical assistance, enhancement of eyes, reinforcement of bone and ligament structures with metal alloy, addition of armor

between lipid layer and vulnerable internal organs. 72% of enhancements complete.//

"Are you alright, Miss Grey." Michelle snapped out of it.

"I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"I was wondering if you had any place to stay."

"I've got a place near the canyons. It isn't much, but it's private and free. And if you would, please call me Michelle or Ashley."

"I will be setting up training sessions for you with Linna. Is there any particular time you can do so?"

"Any time available. I'll make the time. It has been pretty hard to try to learn fighting from videos and remembering SCA practices." Sylia almost smiled at the thought. "Thank you Miss Stingray, I will try not to disappoint you." Michelle walked out of the room.

Practicing with Linna -

Michelle groaned as she pruned herself off of the floor. It had been the fifth time in ten minutes. She hadn't realized just how much she depended on her enhanced speed when fighting until she turned it off. She wiped the sweat off her brow and concentrated again on her opponent. ::She looks so damn relaxed while I'm getting my ass kicked.:: Michelle dropped into a basic defensive stance.

She managed to dodge the first strike and slide out of the way of the second. She even managed to counter, even though it was easily blocked. Then the world turned upside down again and she hit the mat hard.

Linna had to smile as Michelle let out a faint groan and mock twitched slightly.

"You are enjoying this, aren't you." Michelle said almost accusingly, though with a bit of humor as she struggled to her feet. Linna smiled a bit wider as she walked over to the prone woman. She reached down to grasp her hand, then gasped as she was thrown over Michelle and rolled onto the mat. "Now that felt good." Michelle admitted with a smile as she got up. She reached down and easily pulled Linna up. Linna tried the same move but couldn't even get Michelle to budge.

"So how is your suit coming along."

"Sylia says that it should take another week or so to complete. Except for my gauntlets and coloring, I've been staying out of the way."

"What does it look like?"

"It's a silver-grey color and sort've looks like a mix of your suit, Priss', and Sylia's. Sylia said I would be able to go on a mission in a few weeks."

"That's means we'll have to train even harder until then."

Michelle glared at the younger woman and sighed softly. It was going to be a long couple of weeks.

A couple of weeks later -

"Down!" The shout went out as the boomer opened fire. Lasers flashed out and one officer yelled out as it struck him. Leon winced at the sight of the body flying back and hitting the armored van. He prepared to call a retreat when he saw several familiar hardsuits coming onto the scene.

"The Knight Sabers. I wondered when they would show up. And it looks like they've got someone new."

The fifth hardsuit seemed to be a light grey-silver color and seemed similar in design to the green and blue one. The only feature that made it stand out was it's slightly over sized gauntlets that surrounded her hands and lower arms. They were quite familiar to the Inspector, since he had seen them before on a woman carrying a child.

"I guess they got some more help now." Leon watched as the new Saber dodged around the boomer, trying to avoid it more than the other Knight Sabers. She managed to get a few hits in though even if it seemed she was off.

Michelle was having a few minor difficulties with her hardsuit. Even though it worked right, the suit's response time was off for her. It was her own enhanced reaction time that was causing this particular problem. It made the suit seem as though it had a noticable time lag.

//Make adjustments?//

::Yes::

She felt as though her senses were back to normal as though she wasn't wearing the suit. Michelle grinned under her helmet and she flashed forward near her normal speed. She dodged the boomer's fist and punched upward, firing both her gauntlets when it was knocked back. The boomer's chest melted quite nicely and it got blown back, temporarily ko'ed. The other Knight Sabers destroyed it in a hail of railgun spikes and lasers. Michelle gave it the finishing decapitation.

"No fair, she got this one!" Michelle smiled at Priss' tone.

"First come, first serve singer." She quipped back. "One moment." Michelle walked over to Leon.

"Are you and your men okay Inspector."

"We're fine. . .Monica." Michelle winced and pulled up her face visor. She ignored Sylia's protests not to do so.

"Got me there Inspector." She smiled softly and brought a gauntlet hand up and kissed it. She pressed the hand gently against Leon's cheek. "Have a good night, Inspector." Michelle purred. She turned and left, leaving slightly a stunned AD policeman.



Michelle made herself comfortable as she waited for the inevitable.

"Just what were you thinking tonight!?" Sylia was as close to angry as Michelle had seen her since they met.

"My suit wasn't responding right so I had my systems make the modification necessary to feel right. I know I shouldn't have done that without your permission and I am sorry for that."

"I didn't mean that. I meant what you did with Inspector McNichol. Showing who you were and your actions toward him."

"My features were as Monica at the time, so he couldn't recognize my face. And it was harmless."

"You call flirting with him harmless!" Priss was mildly ticked at Michelle.

"Do I have to remind you that I am a grown woman who happens to be twice your age Priss. I see nothing wrong with what I did and neither should you." Michelle gave a sly grin. "Unless you have a few feelings about our dear Inspector."

"No I don't! No way." Priss shouted at the amused cyborg.

"So you do."

"I don't!"

"That's enough children. Michelle, even though it was harmless, you shouldn't have done something like that while we were working." Sylia seemed adamant to Michelle.

"I understand and will comply boss. I will save flirting and rampant sexual actions with Leon until off-duty hours." She said that in a voice and a slight smile like Rei's (Evangelion). Jaws dropped and she smiled. "Don't worry Priss, we could always make it a threesome if you really want to." She walked out of there and got out of the building before Priss went totally ballistic. The next night at Sylia's

"So what is it like?" A curious voice came from in front of Michelle. Michelle glanced up from her newspaper and saw Nene, who was finishing off a piece of cake. Michelle placed the English language newspaper that she had asked (aka begged) Sylia to get for her. She was sort of disappointed to have to talk because she had been reading an interesting article on a crashed space shuttle, the Orca IV that seemed to have some curious holes in it for some reason.

"What is what like?"

"Having whatever you have, the nanites, and being a cyborg?"

Michelle thought about it for a moment. "It just feels like a part of me, but a tiny bit different. It's strange to have all the physical changes and to have a real voice in my head, but I got use to it. May I ask you something, Nene?"

"Yes?"

"It's about Priss. I know you all don't trust me a lot, but you aren't hostile toward me like she is. Sometimes she's sort of friendly to me like she is toward you, but she seems to hate me for some reason."

"Priss has a strong dislike toward boomers and boomeroids."

"So what does that. . ."

"And cyborgs."

"Ah. Thank you Nene, this clears up a lot of things for me."

"Good evening ladies." Sylia walked into the room as immaculate as usual.

Michelle always marveled how Sylia did that.

"So boss, may I be a full part of the team now." Michelle asked eagerly.

Sylia sighed slightly, "Yes even though your behavior during missions has to be improved somewhat."

"I am sorry about that and I plan on apologizing to Priss. If I can get past the way she thinks of me. Sometimes from the way she acts around me, it seems like she thinks I'm going to go crazy or something."

"Priss probably does. But from the indications of your psychological testing, you are quite stable."

"That's nice to know that I'm not looney. So why is Nene here?"

"It about those modifications you made in your hardsuit interface systems."

"Oh."

At Hot Legs - several days later

Michelle sat glumly as she waited for Priss to come out of her dressing room. This apology was going to be a difficult one. And she had to make a promise not to antagonize Priss too much.

Priss came over to the table quickly. Linna and Nene gave cheerful greetings. Michelle waited until they were seated. "Priss I'd like to say, about the teasing a few days ago and all, that I'm . . ."

Priss turned and waved over someone she saw at the door. A tall woman with dark brown hair and light brown eyes started walking in their direction. She wore a blue and white biking suit. While she walked in their direction, Michelle noticed that men around her jerked and turned in her direction as though they touched an electric wire.

//Buma, model 33s//

::A sexaroid. On earth? Are you certain?::

//yes yes.//

::This is most interesting.:: Michelle smiled slightly.

Priss introduced her biking friend as 'Sylvie'. Michelle introduced herself as 'Ash'. Her suspicions were already confirmed by Priss' actions. She didn't know Sylvie was a sexaroid and Michelle wasn't planning on telling her. It wasn't her secret to tell.

Sylvie did not like the look that Priss' friend was giving her. She saw a faint trace of shocked recognition on the other woman's face before her face became more friendly. After a few minutes of talking, she found herself almost liking the other woman. It was just the faint calculating look on her face that made Sylvie a bit nervous.

"So do either of you know where I can get a decent motorcycle. I'm getting just a little tired of having to bum rides everywhere I go." Asked asked with a bit of humor. "And I'm tired of not being able to keep up with you Priss."

"Like you would be able to even if we found you a motorcycle." Priss smirked. Michelle could tell that Priss enjoyed needling her almost as much as Michelle did toward Priss.

"You're right Priss. I'm not insane." Michelle smirked back. After a few moment of wondering about that, Priss sputtered indignantly. "Anyways, I wanted to apologize about the teasing a few nights ago."

"Teasing?" Sylvie asked curiously. Linna started giggling.

"Never mind about that." Priss said abruptly, "I'm going to forgive you for now." There seemed to be a promise of dire retribution in her eyes. Michelle suddenly felt she should be becoming very, very scared.

The next day -

"You did what?!" Michelle was just a bit angry. Priss gave a wide smile.

"Since you were so interested in Leon, I figured you would like to go out with him tonight. So I set up the time, place, and everything else for you and Leon. Enjoy." Priss left a Michelle standing in the middle of the room, mouth open in shock.

Revenge was sweet.

That night -

"Hi Leon." Michelle stood there, as casually dressed as Leon.

"Ready to go."

"I was born ready." Michelle got on back of Leon's motorcycle and they were off to their evening.

At the AD police station the next day, Nene watched as Leon walked (one step above stumbling) into the station and made a beeline toward the coffee. Three cups later, he was slumped in the chair, barely awake.

"Leon!" Nene watched as Leon jerked up, almost spilling his coffee. "Is something wrong?"

"It was just a long night Nene, that's all."

Nene just stood there for a minute, staring at the near comatose Inspector and just walked away when she heard his soft snores.

Michelle sat there and downed a fourth cup of black coffee with a grimace. The nanites certainly didn't help with getting her awake, or with her hangover.

::Sadistic little buggers have probably developed a corrupt sense of humor.:: She had the sensation of a mental chuckle in the back of her mind.

"Hey cyber."

::Priss. Can't she just back off on me being the way I am.:: "Yes Priss."

"How was your night with Leon?" Priss asked cheerfully and loud. Michelle winced in pain.

"It went well Priss."

Nene walked into the room. "Hey, what did you two do last night. Leon was barely awake when he came in this morning."

"It started out well. We did everything that Priss suggested first and then went back to his apartment for a drink."

"Then. . ."

"We had the drink, then another. Oh my goddess." Michelle winced at the memories.

"What happened?"

"The man has some incredible stamina." Eyes widened around the room as Michelle continued. "He just kept going strong all night long. I lost my count at five. It was like he was some sort of god last night. The scary thing was how he kept me going during all that time. We barely took any breaks between each time even to cool off a bit. And you won't believe me when I say that each time was more intense than the last. I felt like screaming in pain and pleasure by the second hour."

"I think I finally got some sleep at around dawn."

Michelle looked around at the wide faces. "That was one of the best

experiences I've ever had in my life. I never knew clubhopping was so much fun." Massive facefaults.

"What did you think I was talking about?" Michelle asked innocently as she continued to page through the notes.

Nene hoped to changed the subject. They had been suckered big time, "What are you looking at?"

"Oh, just a bit of something I found interesting. It's on the 33s buma. Since my. . .enhancements have some of the characteristics, I decided to find out more about myself. The stuff is actually quite interesting."

"I think I'll pass." Priss proceeded to ignore Michelle which she did except to snipe. Michelle returned the favor.

Michelle checked over the notes, then remembered the morning paper she looked at yesterday. ::The vampire murders are being done by a sexaroid for blood nutrients. for Sylvie and at least one more, I think. The amount of blood taken would indicate that.::

"Ladies," A cool voice came from behind the group.

Michelle placed her paper down as Sylia came into the room. "Evening boss." The meeting started once all of the group sat down. Michelle listened as Sylia described the combat mech known as the D.D. Airborne Battlemover, that was stolen from the Orca IV. Michelle mentally drooled as the amount for the recovery of said Battlemover was mentioned.

"Michelle, would you stay for a few minutes." A few minutes after the meeting, Sylia continued. "I have just a few questions on your designs."

"That would make sense. I can't remember how I made them myself and I have no plans on them."

"Why is that?"

"I blacked out on some of the more inventive designs I made. One minute I'm looking at the beginning product, the next I'm looking at the finished. Frankly, it scares the shit out of me because I don't know what happens."

"Is this something to do with your AI."

"I think so. I'm thinking it's just how they operate."

"Another things are the redesigns I found on my mainframe."

"Which ones."

"The ones for the K-12, K-17, and the Wasp helicopters."

"It seemed a challange to me to make something like that and have some very serious limits. I didn't make any serious changes and I'm thinking of having Nene slip them into their techs department. They could use the help."

"Why are you doing this?"

"I haven't had much business since I've joined up with you and with your employment I really don't need to much. Besides, the designs and research are something I wanted to do for a while now."

"So, what are you doing with my father's buma research?"

Michelle's opinion of Sylia raised another notch above its already high heights.

"You knew I was working on that stuff."

Sylia smiled and Michelle sighed. "I'll show you what I've been working on lately. It's something I didn't want you to or the others see until I was certain it was ready. Which was why I blocked all your cameras in the machine shop." Michelle followed Sylia to the machine shop, where Michelle called out softly. "Hey Lita, you can come on out now."

A soft 'bleek' echoed through the shop and a furry shape leapt out of its hiding place toward the pair of women. It jumped high into Michelle's arms. Michelle staggered slightly at the weight of the creature.

"What is that?!" Sylia asked sharply.

"This is Lita, a small buma based on your fathers designs and I hope his original intent. An AI boomer that is to help, rather than hurt people. I used a creatures body based on an old series I read sometimes, the treecat." Sylia studied the six-legged treecat with interest. The cat had a mottled brown color and greenish eyes. Except for the six legs, the front two having opposable thumbs, and a intelligent look on the face, it looked a lot like a cat.

"What can it do."

"She can access most computers simply by being in near proximity to them. She has to do so because that is the only way she can communicate to us in our language. She has a bio-converter power system backed up by a minature buma power system. Her body has light armor surrounding the internal parts and the tail is a lot stronger than it looks. The only offensive weapons are her teeth and claws. The monomolecular claws are one centimeter long with 'normal' sharp claw sheaths, all of which are retractable. She has been on for a week and seems a lot like a sexaroid mentally as she develops."

"Why did you build her?"

"For a couple of reasons. One is so I can have some more backup in some instances. A second is she is the first step to prove to everyone that boomers can be good without the chance of going bonkers. For this reason alone, I believe she is worth more in the long run than anything else I do in the Knight Sabers."

"While your actions are somewhat admirable, not telling me first was definately not. You shouldn't do these sort of things behind my back."

Michelle's body language went cold for a split second, "Et tu Brute. You're the one who is studying one of my nanite samples in order to create a weapon to use against me if I end up exhibiting signs of cyberpsychosis." Sylia's blank expression flickered slightly with surprise. "I think we are sort of even in the lack of trust issues."

"If you try tell me about the important things you are doing and I try do the same, will that be sufficient?" Sylia asked calmly.

Michelle thought about this for a second and smiled, "I believe it would work for me boss." Lita gave a loud purr of contentment.

From outside the door one could hear Michelle say in a cheerful and irritated voice, "You bloody cat, you stole the rest of the celery. I can't believe you, where did you get your morals from." That was followed by a cheerful 'bleek' and the sounds of pursuit.

If one listened real hard, the person who did might have sworn that they heard Sylia giggle slightly.

A few days later -

Sylia walked into the hardsuit room to a particular sight. Michelle was simply sitting at a table, staring at a railgun spike intently. She was partially surrounded by the schematics that Sylia gave her for the D.D. Sylia walked up to the other woman and watched the spike also. A glistening grey seemed to flow over the spike for a few minutes before disappearing. Michelle placed it with the other spikes and turned toward Sylia.

"Hi boss. What's wrong?"

"Nothing at all." Sylia looked around curiously. "Where's your cat." Before Michelle could answer, Lita ran into the room and jumped up on a perch, all while holding a large celery stick. She proceeded to chew on it messily and ignored Michelle as Michelle pointed at her.

Michelle glared at the blueprints. "These pieces of crap schematics don't tell enough about it to really on. This bloody mech is armed to the teeth with god knows what and they want us to get it back without knowing what it can do and can't do. Are they nuts because frankly I think they are."

"It's what we've got to work with."

Michelle snarled slightly, "I know for a fact that my celery chewing cataroid over there has fifty times more common sense than whatever idiot or idiots who designed this monstrosity. And she only a few weeks old."

"Is that why you are working on your railgun spikes."

"I'm really hoping that we can get the DD while it is inactive, but if it is powered, I've been modifying these so they can be a bit more effective against it. Sylia, there's one more thing. It's a minor thing but you should know."

"Yes?"

"I think there might be something different about Priss' friend Sylvie. I wouldn't have said anything because it would betray a friend. But I think this could eventually create a problem with the team. I have a feeling she might be connected to those 'vampire' murders somehow. I can't tell anything else besides that in definite."

"I will checkup on that." Sylia left Michelle to her own devices.

"Thank you Sylia." Michelle mulled over what she had done. She hadn't lied to Sylia, not exactly. But she wouldn't feel right about telling everything about Sylvie, who she could consider a friend. "This job doesn't get any easier, does it." She muttered to herself.

Michelle almost gasped in shock as all of the clues finally set almost perfectly; the DD, Sylvie, and Orca IV. ::I can't believe I missed it before. The 33s buma is illegal on earth but not on Genaros station. The Orca IV came from Genaros, stolen by whoever piloted it. Sylvie, a 33s, showed up in a relatively short time after the Orca crashed near MegaTokyo.::

::Wait. The DD Battlemover was on Orca when it was stolen and is currently being used. A 33s, Sylvie or another, has the abilities necessary to run something like that easily. How could I have missed all of that?: Michelle made a few adjustments in her equipment. :Even if it is all coincidence, I can't take that sort of chance.::

Priss noticed her motions. "The bionic woman is a bit nervous, isn't she."

Michelle knew she shouldn't have left her old movies out. "Maybe you can't handle playing in the big leagues."

Michelle had had enough of Priss' remarks and attitude. She stood up and moved toward the hardsuited woman. "Now look, I know you don't like me because I am a cyborg, but you will stop this sort of thing right now. I am damn tired of being reminded that I am some sort of freak. I would like to think I had some chance at normalcy. Do you understand me?!"

Priss decided to back away. Michelle smiled, "I guess so." She backed away too, giving Priss room.

Sylia frowned slightly at the altercation from the driver's seat. There used to be a bit of playfulness in Priss' and Michelle's teasing but that was vicious on both sides. And it had sounded as though whatever is happening has reached a critical point of some sort.

"We're almost there."

Leon attempted to move again and tried to ignore the pain that his injured ribs gave him and the feeling of the metal band around his neck. He had tried to stop the DD. Battlemover in a K-12 and had managed to keep it back until it went into some kind of hypermode. He knew that meant the J-1 had taken over and it was minutes from



blowing up most of Mega-Tokyo with a .5 megaton neutron bomb. But he had the feeling that he wouldn't live to see it. The battlemover aimed its machine cannon at him. Suddenly the restraint around his neck exploded. He saw several different colored hardsuits appear on the scene on the horizon.

::The Knight Sabers.:: He felt the K-12 and himself being dragged back from the growing battle. A soft voice said, "Please don't move, Inspector."

"The D.D., it has a 1/2 megaton neutron bomb in it."

Monica said softly, "That's what the boss said. I've got to go help stop that thing now."

Leon watched as the Knight Saber went into the fight. "Good Luck."

Michelle smiled a bit. Leon barely heard from the Saber, "I think I'll need it."

Michelle watched impassively from her vantage point, studying where everyone and everything was. She was told to stay back as the rest of the team dealt with the battlemover. This was mainly because she didn't have a motoroid yet and would have to rely only on her suit. She managed to get a slight clause placed into her promise; with Sylia's permission she could help if there was need. She continued checking around, making sure that no one was wandering in unexpectedly.

The team had managed to damage the battlemover before losing the capacity of the motoroids. Then she heard what she half expected over the open communication net. "Priss, you're going to have to shoot me to stop me." Michelle keyed her com. "Sylia, I'm moving in." Then she cut it off before a reply came back. Firing her jets at maximum power, she flew. She armed her railgun launcher.

"No I can't!" Priss shouted out as she aimed. She had only one shot at this. Her motoid had been destroyed and the final seconds of the neutron bomb were counting down. If she didn't stop the battlemover, all of MegaTokyo would die.

"You have to!"

Michelle watched as Priss raised her railgun launcher even as she herself aimed. Michelle changed her target briefly and fired one grazing shot at Priss and the rest at the battlemover and occupment. Priss fell to the ground, essentially paralyzed by the railgun spike and watched the battlemover start in on her. A splurt of blood had flown from Syvie's stomach and she slumped. Michelle couldn't manuver due to the speed she was flying at and got hit by near point blank energy fire. She felt the pain as it scorched and gouge her armor dreadfully.

A few seconds later, the battlemover jerked and slowed.

A few seconds after that, it stopped moving and nearly fell over.

Michelle scanned the thing anxiously as she cautiously moved toward

it.

All the readings came back that the battlemover was deactivated as well as the neutron bomb. She sighed and turned on the communication net. "Sylia, I think it's dead."

Michelle heard from Nene. "She's right, the battlemover and the bomb are disarmed."

"You fucking bitch, you goddamn killed her!" Priss screamed at Michelle from her prone position as she saw the limp figure of her friend.

"No, I didn't. No more than you are dead." Michelle pulled Sylvie's limp form from the Battlemover. "The nanites are repairing the damage and she will awaken in a few hours. Your suit will recover in a minute or two. Michelle knew her voice sounded cool but couldn't help it.

"Would you explain." Sylia's precise voice came over the communicaton. Michlle carried Sylvie along as they went back to the semi.

"You saw that I was modifying the railgun spikes a few days back."

Sylia nodded.

"You never asked what I was doing to them. I packed them full of computer nanites with two functions. Neutralize a hostile CI and temporarily neutralize a nonhostile CI or an AI."

"Why didn't you tell me this."

"I didn't figure out the Sylvie had anything to do with the battlemover until a little before now. I had the neutralization of the DD planned as a last chance precaution, but I had to make some dirty modifications for the bomb and for Sylvie. They had about a 75 percent chance of succeeding only if I had multiple shots into the cockpit. Any other shot, the nanites would have taken too long to work and we'd be dead."

Priss was still angry. "You cold, calculating bitch. You never tell half of the stuff you are up to and you treat us all like pawns in some sort of game. You probably already knew that Sylvie was a boomer and you never told us. Damn you."

Michelle glanced at Sylia and saw that Sylia knew. "I knew from the first time I saw her. I had no right to tell you who she was." Michelle looked blank, "And you are right, I am damned. I have been for a long time."

Later at Sylia's, Priss waited anxiously as the final adjustments to Sylvie were made to make her self-sufficient. The nanites Michelle had fixed the majority of the damage by the time they got back to HQ. Between Sylia, Mackie, and Doctor Raven, they had managed to make the adjustments needed.

Sylia came out on her roof. If the cameras in that area hadn't suddenly gone black, she wouldn't have known where Michelle had gone.

She found the woman sitting, looking at the stars as she absentmindedly petted Lita. Lita sat there and purred a long soft note of sadness.

She turned as Sylia came up near her. "Miss Stingray, is there a problem with Sylvie?"

"No, she came through all right and should be able to get up within a day or two. Do you want to talk about it."

"You mean the deceptions and what I did to Priss and the rest of you. I had to do it that way. It was just my suspicions and I knew they wouldn't be listened to, so I made the plans alone." She laughed softly. "'Damned if you do, damned if you don't.'"

"You are not damned, do you hear me!" Sylia stated almost angrily.

"Then what do you call all of what I've done since I've become the manipulative monster in front of you."

"Being human of course." Sylia left Michelle to think about his. "You will be punished for not informing me about some things, but I think you should know I will listen to you more carefully from now on. Sylia left the rooftop to Michelle.

The next morning found Michelle looking in on Sylvie. The woman laid on the bed with a large bandage on her stomach where the railgun spike had skewered her. Michelle looked rather guilty.

"Sylvie, I'm sorry about what happened to you and what I did to you."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why if you knew that I was a buma from the first time you saw me, you didn't tell Priss? Or why did you plan to save my life? Why do you care about me since I'm a buma?"

"Because, I know what it is like to be different from everyone else. And being of homo sapiens doesn't automatically make one human. Or being a buma automatically not make you human. Don't ever forget that!"

Lita jumped up on the bed and Sylvie jerked in surprise. After a moment she started petting the treecat buma. "This is Lita, she's. . .well a treecat. A bit like you, I guess."

Sylvie looked at the young woman in front of her, "I'm wondering, who are you really and how did you get mixed up in this."

Michelle laughed. "That's a long story." She heard an angry shout that sounded like Sylia. "And apparently one for a different time."

Sylvie listened carefully to the conversation as she petted Lita, "Michelle, the news said the Battlemover reactivated in the caravan that it was being transported in and escaped by using some sort of

cloaking device. Do you know anything about this?"

"Sylia, why would you say something like that. Do I look like the sort of person who would steal a large mech for the purpose of keeping it out of the wrong hands it was being returned to. Besides the neutron bomb was already taken out before it disappeared. Not that I know anything about that." Sylia sighed and Sylvie couldn't help giggling.

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Until Next time . . . or the next draft

End  
file.